326 First, there is that of the blacksmith (saba or sahaba in the local tongue). Two kinds of blacksmiths may be distinguished among the Mossi. First, the blacksmiths who are gathered into separate villages or in large special quarters within the village, both cases being frequent in the northern part of Mossi territory, and secondly the isolated blacksmiths, such as those of Ouagadougou for example.

325 326 The blacksmiths who live in separate villages or quarters smelt the iron ore in large furnaces in the bush. They do this once a year, during the dry season, and the process takes one month.

The whole blacksmith village sets down to the task and builds a certain number of blast furnaces, at the ratio of one for every two blacksmiths.

The furnaces are built of red earth near the hills that contain iron ore, and it takes five days to build one of them. Once this is done each blacksmith pair takes over a furnace and uses it. The smiths do not use it together, incidentally, but each one in turn.

Our blacksmiths break up the soil with a soumbéré or taré. They break up pieces of ore and pile them near the furnace. They spread out a layer of dry wood at the bottom of the furnace, then a layer of ore, then another layer of wood, another layer of ore, etc., up to the top. Then the fire is lit.

The fire is stirred with bellows and kept up for three days. At the end of this period of time, the doors made at the bottom of the blast furnace are opened. The iron escapes through these special openings, which are distinct from the permanently open doors through which the slag runs out. On the fourth day the iron has cooled off, and it is removed from the little pits into which it has flowed. It is broken with an iron mallet and returned to the furnace.

The total labor lasts one month. Every evening our blacksmiths return to the village. Some of them produce ten loads of iron /513/ (about 300 kilograms), others only two or three (60 or 90 kilograms).

326 ●135 423 As for isolated blacksmiths, they do not smelt iron. They buy it from the blacksmiths of the Yatenga (Ouahigouya circle) who are great iron smelters and who own small, famed ferruginous hills around Ouahigouya.

The Mossi grow tobacco in fields around their
248 homesteads, where they also cultivate their most important cash crops,
249 cotton and indigo, which are used in the manufacture and dyeing of cotton cloth.

INTRODUCTION

136 The wild fauna of Mossi country include several species of antelope, deer, monkeys, rabbits, snakes, and wild pigs. Elephants roam the beds of rivers and streams and often destroy cultivated fields, while lions and hyenas distress the people by attacking livestock. The pools and rivers of Mossi country are inhabited by turtles, crocodiles, and various species of scaled and scaleless fish. Chickens, muscovy ducks, and half-domesticated guinea fowl are the most valuable species of birds.

231 The Mossi have long been famous for their splendid donkeys and
[492] horses. Donkeys are sometimes ridden, but they are used primarily as
[439] beasts of burden. Horses are important for military and ceremonial purposes and for export to the tsetse-fly zones to the south. The Mossi raise two main types of cattle: a zebu-like animal in the northern regions and a
[439] dwarf variety in the south. These animals are raised primarily for their milk and for export, and are seldom killed for meat until they are fairly old. Goats and sheep provide the main source of meat. Hog-raising is not wide-
[771] spread, and seems to be declining in importance with the increased ob-
[178] servance of Islamic food taboos, which is on the uprise even among people who are still pagans.

● 135 The subsoil of Mossi country is not well known, but so far there have been no major discoveries of mineral deposits. The only known gold field
[301] remained unworked in aboriginal times. The Mossi do not like to wear
[325] gold ornaments, preferring jewelry worked from imported copper and
[439] silver. The northern Mossi worked their local iron in aboriginal times, but those in the south obtained this metal from caravan traders.

175 The nineteenth-century reports of Barth and other European travelers
439 indicate that the Mossi conducted a rather extensive foreign trade. At least
[443] six caravan routes passed through their territory, and traders such as the Hausa and Mandingo visited the important Mossi trading centers at Yako, Pouitenga, and Ouagadougou, where they exchanged Saharan and forest products for Mossi livestock and cloth.[8]

101 The Mossi belong to the Voltaic culture area, a name given by Delafosse to the regions drained by the Black, Red, and White Voltas and their tributaries. The area embraces parts of Mali, the Ivory Coast, Dahomey, the Upper Volta, and northern Ghana.[9] It includes a vast congeries of peoples such
[199] as the Dagomba, Mamprusi, Dagari, Birifo, Senufo, Gurmanche, Gurunsi, Lobi, Bobo, Tallensi, Konkomba, Dogon, Somba, Fulse, and Ninisi, all of whom speak languages belonging to the Gur or Moshi-Grunshi group of

12:Skinner E-4,5 (1955-1957) 1962
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long been famous. The former are sometimes ridden but are used primarily as beasts of burden. Horses were and are still important for military and ceremonial purposes and for external trade to other areas.

The Mossi have never excelled in metalworking. The people in the northern part of the country have worked indigenous ores since aboriginal times. Those in the south get iron mainly from traders and caravans. The other metals which the Mossi smiths manufacture into tools and ornaments are also obtained from traders.

TRADE IN HISTORICAL TIMES

The geographic position of Mossi country has much to do with its being an important trade and market center. The country itself has always produced grain, cotton and livestock for export. And for several centuries caravans have passed through this region carrying Sudanese and Saharan products to the forest zones to the south, and carrying forest products back to the arid north. The beginning of this trade is lost in the dim past, but it safe to say that it developed shortly after or along with the founding of Timbuktu about 1100 A.D. The Mossi themselves were not definitely linked to this important *entrepot* until they raided it in 1328, but we can assume that they had been trading there for some time before that event took place. Similarly, we have no record of when the Mossi began trading with the forest zones, but we can also assume that this trade began around the same period or even before.

Our first evidence of Mossi trade and commerce comes from Europeans who were themselves interested in conducting their own trading activities with the peoples in the Bend of the Niger. Bowditch, an Englishman who had journeyed to Ashanti to sign a treaty facilitating the reopening of a profitable trade with the coast, wangled the first important piece of information about the Mossi from his reluctant hosts:

> Five journies from Yngwa is Mosee, a more warlike but less visited kingdom: it consists of many states, but the superior monarch is named Billa, and the capital Kookoopella. I place it to the N.W. because its merchants pass by Yngwa; they do not cross the Karhalla [White Volta] nor any river which is not fordable. (Bowditch 1819 : 180)

This information is not strictly correct since Koupela was not the capital of any of the Mossi kingdoms, but Bowditch's informant had probably heard of Koupela because it was the largest political entity near the large caravan center at Pouitenga.